

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

SPECIAL ORDER NO. 48

November 19, 2003

**SUBJECT: VISIBLE TATTOOS AND BRANDING STANDARDS FOR SWORN  
DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES**

**PURPOSE:** Professionalism is the foundation and hallmark of the Los Angeles Police Department, and it is the major contributor to our worldwide reputation for excellence. The Department is taking proactive measures to ensure that all sworn Department employees adhere to personal appearance standards.

This Order delineates standards for tattoos and brandings to ensure that sworn Department employees present a professional appearance. It places accountability for compliance with those standards not only upon each employee, but also upon his/her supervisors and commanding officers.

**PROCEDURE:**

**I. TATTOOS AND BRANDING STANDARDS.**

**A. On-Duty Uniformed Employees.** Sworn Department employees, while on-duty, shall not display any tattoos and/or brandings. Sworn uniformed employees shall cover any visible tattoos and/or brandings by wearing a Department approved uniform or by wearing a skin patch that covers the tattoos and/or brandings.

**Note:** A skin patch is any patch or bandage that is of a neutral tone (e.g., Ace bandage or Band-Aid).

**B. On-Duty Non-Uniformed Employees.** Sworn Department non-uniformed employees shall cover any tattoos and/or brandings by wearing Department approved business attire. If clothing cannot cover the tattoos and/or brandings, they shall be covered with a skin patch.

**Note:** Sworn officers working in an undercover assignment are exempt from this policy while working in an undercover capacity.

**II. EMPLOYEES WORKING OFF-HOURS ENGAGED IN DEPARTMENT BUSINESS.** Employees working off-hours engaged in Department business activities, either in a uniformed or non-uniformed capacity shall not display tattoos and/or brandings. The means by which tattoos and/or brandings

are covered shall be the same for off-duty employees as previously outlined for on-duty employees.

**Note:** Off-hours business activities include, but are not limited to, a court appearance, attendance at an administrative hearing, business meetings or working off-duty in uniform.

**III. SUPERVISORS AND COMMANDING OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITY.**

Primary responsibility for complying with Department personal appearance standards rests with each sworn Department employee. However, supervisors and commanding officers are also responsible for ensuring that sworn Department employees comply with these standards. Non-compliance with the Department's personal appearance standards may be misconduct, and commanding officers shall ensure that corrective action is taken.

**AMENDMENTS:** This Order adds Section 3/605.90 to the Department Manual.

**AUDIT RESPONSIBILITY:** All bureau commanding officers shall monitor compliance with this directive in accordance with Department Manual Section 0/080.30.

**WILLIAM J. BRATTON**  
Chief of Police

**DISTRIBUTION "A"**